

2988

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **NOV 21 1988**
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Central Baptist Church
and or common Central Baptist Church

2. Location

street & number 500 N. E. 1st Avenue not for publication
city, town Miami vicinity of
state Florida 33132 code FL county Dade code FL 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Central Baptist Church of Miami, Florida, Inc.
street & number 500 N. E. 1st Avenue
city, town Miami vicinity of state Florida 33132

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dade County Courthouse
street & number 75 W. Flagler Street
city, town Miami state Florida 33130

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title FMSF-Miami Multiple Resource
Historic Preservation Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date June, 1985 federal state county local
depository for survey records Bureau of Historic Preservation
city, town Tallahassee state Florida 32399-0250

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–1938	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1926 **Builder/Architect** Dougherty & Gardner; Ley & Company, Inc.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see Bibliography for Cover Nomination

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Miami

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 17 581030 2850870
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

Miami, Lots 1, 2, 17, 18, 19, and 20, less the easterly 10 feet of Lot 1, and less the southerly 10 feet of Lots 17 through 20, of Block 63 of the plat of MIAMI NORTH (PB B-41) - follows historic/legal boundary

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sarah Eaton /Vicki L. Welcher, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date October, 1988

street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida 32399-0250

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Greg W. Perry*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date October 17, 1988

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Tom Schlase date 1/3/89

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
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Section number 7 Page 1 Central Baptist Church

DESCRIPTION:

Condition: Excellent

The Central Baptist Church is a four-story masonry building executed in the Neo-Classical style of architecture with elements of the Renaissance Revival. The church building was erected in 1926 according to plans provided by the architectural firm of Dougherty and Gardner from Nashville, Tennessee.¹ The church building is a symmetrical block of steel and reinforced concrete construction capped by a polygonal rotunda extending above the four-story height.

The exterior of the church is characterized by two projecting porticos on the south and east elevations. The main block of the church consists of a rusticated first floor, flat walls on the second and third floors, a cornice band between the third and fourth floors, and a row of pilasters delineating the bays on the fourth floor. The projecting porticos consist of a rusticated ground floor, a monumental Ionic arcade extending to the top of the third floor, and a pedimented gable end at the fourth floor level. The Ionic arcade is three bays wide with engaged Ionic columns flanking the arched openings. The roof surfaces of the main block, the rotunda, and the projecting gable ends are all covered in Spanish tile. The gable ends are embellished with masonry urns and crosses which surmount the roof surface. A cupola has recently been resurfaced with gold leaf.

The fenestration pattern of the main block is comprised of a strong horizontal and vertical alignment of windows. The windows are all casement type, and their surrounds are articulated in a different manner on each floor. The windows on the first floor are recessed within deep openings. The windows on the second and third floors are framed with classically styled molding, and the windows on the fourth floor are set into plain openings which are then surmounted by a decorative masonry panel.

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The interior of the church is divided into an internal circular core, a circulation corridor running the perimeter of the central core, and a series of rooms extending from the corridor to the exterior walls in a variety of plan configurations. On the first floor are found the church dining room and general maintenance rooms. The sanctuary takes up the central core of the second, third, and fourth floors. Classrooms, choir rehearsal rooms, study rooms, and a library are found on the spaces adjacent to the exterior walls on the upper floors. The main entrances to the church were found beneath each projecting portico, and access to the sanctuary was via a set of double stairs found within each portico.

The interior of the circular sanctuary comprises a very imposing space. The platform altar is located at the northwest corner of the circle and is set within an intricately carved Palladian-style screen. Behind the altar is located the baptistry. Five aisles radiating from the altar serve to divide the sanctuary seating into four main sections. A projecting balcony adds additional seating to the sanctuary as it rings around the circle in approximately a 270° turn.

The interior walls of the sanctuary are embellished with Palladian-inspired motifs ranging from recessed coffered vaults, decorative plaster panels featuring animal skulls, and ornamental plaster garlands. A row of circular columns, capped with Corinthian capitals, serves to delineate the perimeter of the balcony level. From the interior of the cupola hangs a magnificent glass chandelier which is lowered through a series of pulleys for maintenance and repair. Within each exterior bay of the balcony are found elaborate stained glass windows that depict religious figures and scenes. The ceiling of the sanctuary is characterized by flat tiles arranged in a herringbone pattern about the central cupola.

Abutting the church building immediately to the north is an addition erected in 1946. The exterior of the addition was executed in a modified Neo-Classical architectural style which harmonizes with that of the church building. On the first, second, and third floors, the addition is reached by way of the circulation corridor of the church building. The addition comprises a full three-story height and serves to house the church educational functions.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Specific Date: 1926

Architects: Dougherty and Gardner

Builder: Fred T. Ley and Company, Inc.

Central Baptist Church is architecturally significant because it represents an excellent expression of the Neo-Classical style of architecture in downtown Miami. The Central Baptist Church building is also significant for its important historical associations with the city's religious history.

The exterior of Central Baptist Church embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Neo-Classical architectural style, a popular design expression for 1920s institutional buildings in Miami. The excellence of the building's design, craftsmanship, and detailed articulation is particularly evident in the treatment of the projecting porticos, the distinctive roofline, and the decorative ornament found throughout the interior of the sanctuary. The configuration of the church elevations is noteworthy for its adaptation to the area's climate through the placement of the deep porticos and the tall ceiling in the sanctuary. Furthermore, the circular configuration of the sanctuary allows for natural ventilation to keep the interior cool throughout the hot summer months.

Central Baptist Church houses Miami's oldest Baptist congregation and is the third church structure to occupy the same site.² Organized two days before the City of Miami came into existence in 1896, the congregation was known as the First Baptist Church until renamed the Central Baptist Church in 1936.³ The Baptist Church has served the religious and humanitarian needs of downtown Miami for 90 years, and coincidentally the growth of the Baptist Church closely parallels the development of downtown Miami.

The first church building stood on lots donated by Henry M. Flagler, the man responsible for establishing a railroad link to South Florida.⁴ The first wooden church building was then

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replaced with a masonry structure on a larger site just a block away, the present site of Central Baptist Church.⁵ That masonry structure was demolished in January 1926, at the height of Miami's Boom, to make way for a large construction project which was to house a mix of uses.⁶

As far back as 1925, the church leaders pondered the idea of keeping the church within downtown Miami, even though the residential expansion was beyond the limits of the central business district.⁷ Late in 1925, the church announced that it was going to stay downtown and construct a combination church and office building, 23 stories in height, and costing \$1.6 million.⁸ Upon its completion, the building would have been the tallest in Florida, rising to a height of 336 feet.⁹ The Bust came late in 1926 and the plans for such a building were scrapped. In its place, the present church building was erected at a cost of \$500,000.¹⁰

Today, Central Baptist Church remains one of the last three active churches to hold regular services within the downtown central business district.¹¹ Its vast seating capacity, at upwards of 2,500 people, makes it one of the largest assembly halls in the downtown area as well.

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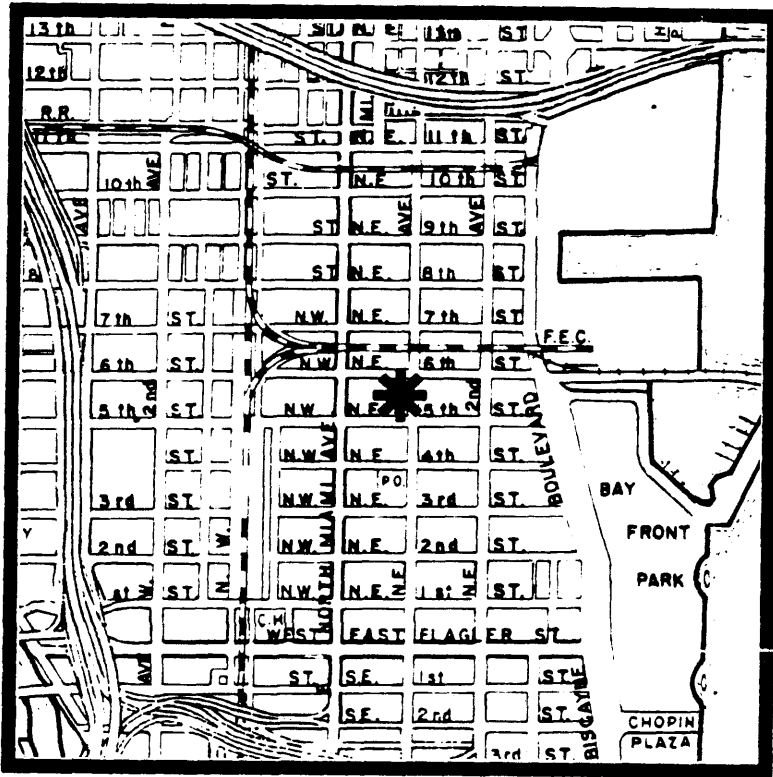
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NOTES

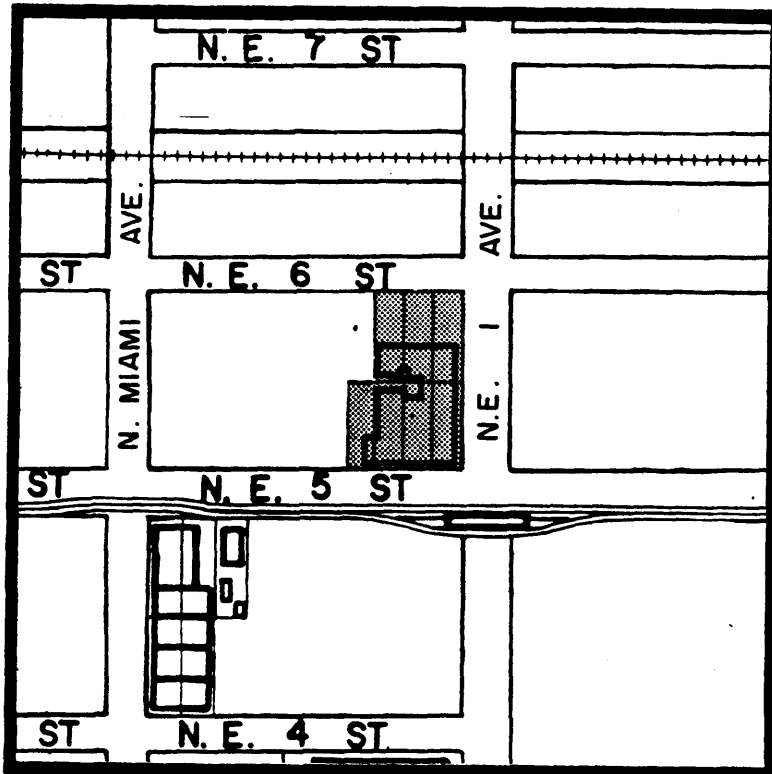
1. City of Miami, Building and Zoning Department, Building Plans on Microfilm, Roll 14, Plan M-18.
2. "Central Baptist Church: From Dirt-Floored Tent to Majestic Sanctuary," Miami Herald, 24 July 1971, p. 4-B.
3. See note 2 above.
4. "Sewell Helped Form Baptist Church," Miami News, 10 November 1984, p. 4-C.
5. See note 4 above.
6. "Miami's First Baptist Church," Tropic Magazine, January 1926, p. 14; "Church to Rise," Miami Herald, 11 April 1925; and "First in South," Miami Herald, 7 May 1925.
7. "Keeping the Church in the Downtown Section Long a Problem," Miami Herald, 19 April 1925.
8. "Twelve Skyscrapers Being Built Here," The Miamian, November 1925, p. 14.
9. See note 8 above.
10. "Work Begins on \$500,000 Baptist Church for Flock that First Worshipped in Tent," The Miamian, April 1927, p. 6.
11. "Tram Tax May Move Churches Out of Downtown," Miami Herald, 4 September 1982, p. 20-A.

CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

500 N.E. 1 AVENUE



location



site plan